

METROPOLITAN COUNCIL

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DATE: January 29, 2013

TO: Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission

FROM: Arne Stefferud, Manager, Regional Parks and Natural Resources
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SUBJECT: Information Item: Scott County–Three Rivers Partnership: Expanding Services Through Collaboration

INTRODUCTION

Scott County and Three Rivers Park District have a 30+ year relationship for acquiring, developing, and operating regional parks and trails in Scott County. This relationship led to the early acquisitions and development of lands that now make up Murphy-Hanrehan Park Reserve and Cleary Lake Regional Park. In recent years, Scott County became more active in regional parks and trails and acquired land that now makes up Cedar Lake Farm Regional Park, Doyle-Kennefick Regional Park, Spring Lake Regional Park, and Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve, as well as development of the Scott West Regional Trail.

With both agencies owning and operating regional recreation facilities in Scott County, the Park District and Scott County started discussions in 2008 to identify ways to enhance the relationship through a collaborative approach toward regional park and trail operations. The outcome of this work was a new joint powers agreement (JPA) that envisioned a true partnership that called for sharing resources and expertise to build and operate the regional park and trail system in Scott County as efficiently and effectively as possible.

Over the past two years, Three Rivers Park District and Scott County have worked together to implement the partnership to create greater efficiencies, while enhancing regional park and trail opportunities for Scott County residents and visitors. Initial efforts of the partnership focused on learning more about each other's expertise and operating capacity and identifying how they might apply these resources to the partnership operations. From there, they began to analyze and identify the most effective and efficient service delivery models for both day-to-day operations and project delivery. During this time, Scott County programs like Highway Operations and Engineering led projects for the partnership, and the Sheriff's Office assumed patrol, emergency response, and investigation for both County and Three Rivers' facilities. The Park District picked up many day-to-day tasks associated with operating the County's parks, and provided expertise in areas of natural resource management, planning, and design. They have taken significant steps during the first two years of the partnership to enhance visitor services and create operating efficiencies without increasing net operating expenses.

Mark Themig will update the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission on this innovative model for delivering regional park and trail services.